

GUEST VIEWS

# Court shouldn't rush its ruling on voter ID law

Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen wants the Wisconsin Supreme Court to intervene and institute the state's voter ID law in time for the November elections.

Slow down, J.B. We know that you're a water carrier for the Republican Party that rammed through the state law, but it's appropriate to let due process take its course.

It is the court's responsibility to ensure that laws meet constitutional muster.

The law that requires a photo ID was passed last year and was in place for the February primary but has since been ordered suspended by two Dane County Circuit Court judges in separate lawsuits. One judge said the law resulted in a "substantial impairment of the right to vote."

But Van Hollen, in a statement, said: "People in this state are very frustrated that a common-sense law enacted by the Legislature and signed by the governor has been blocked."

The problem is that the law may not be as common sense as Van Hollen believes. One of the circuit court judges said the law could be one of the most restrictive ones in the country, and plenty of them have been passed or proposed recently. That's because there has been an orchestrated movement from conservatives across the country to push voter ID laws.

The story in Wisconsin is the same. Supporters say the bill will prevent voter fraud—although there is no evidence of rampant voter fraud in Wisconsin or even in the country. The argument also is that the law will help protect the integrity of the elections, but it would do nothing to prevent felons from voting or duplicate voting.

Supporters like to point out that IDs are needed to rent a video, cash a check and conduct other forms of commerce. But those are not rights protected by the Constitution.

Then there's the constitutional question of Wisconsin's voter ID law requiring an estimated 300,000 people who do not have driver's licenses or IDs to get state-issued IDs. Those IDs may be free, but they require birth certificates that voters must pay for.

In this country, we've had too many examples of citizens who were denied by some law the right to vote, which is one of our most precious freedoms. We've been down the shameful paths of poll tax and literacy tests, whose only purpose was to keep people from voting.

Without evidence of fraud, voter ID laws accomplish nothing but making it more difficult for some citizens to vote. That is certainly a topic that deserves the full attention of our courts, regardless of how cumbersome that process is or how impatient Van Hollen might be.

—The La Crosse Tribune



Van Hollen



By Rick James  
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REYNOLDS  
JOURNAL EDITOR

OTHER VIEWS

# Romney's square deal exudes authenticity

TAMPA, FLA.

Candidates often say they write their own speeches, but in the case of Mitt Romney's convention address, it is a claim more plausible than most. It was highly personal, rhetorically unambitious and perfectly imaginable as the product of Romney's iPad.

Assuming this to be the case, we have been handed an interesting artifact. Setting aside aesthetic and partisan judgments, what do his preferred arguments and illustrations reveal about Romney himself?

First, at least stylistically, Romney is the retro candidate. His stories are sentimental, his jokes corny. His parents are his heroes. His family is aggressively nuclear. There's an admirable defiance about it all. You want authenticity? You got it. In your heart you know he's square.

Not that there is anything wrong with that. Some of my best friends—actually, me—are squares. But this is a change from recent presidents. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush were baby boomer archetypes—one a story of indiscipline, the other of repentance. In his 2000 convention address, Bush said, "I believe ... in forgiveness, because I needed it." The need itself was humanizing and typical of his times.

Romney, in contrast, inhabits the world before Mrs. Robinson. Some deny it existed. Romney proves them wrong. This is not nostalgia; it is a lifestyle choice.



MICHAEL GERSON

Some on the cultural left have little tolerance for this alternative lifestyle. But millions of Americans, including many Mormons and evangelicals, practice it without shame. It may help explain Romney's strong appeal to seniors—a group he leads by double digits, for example, in Florida. Former Gov. Jeb Bush hypothesizes that cultural affinity may be a "secret weapon" in Romney's outreach to the elderly. What's not to like about an upstanding, earnest man prone to reciting "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" in public?

In this case, anachronism is also a kind of armor. No man so grounded, so stable, so religious, so endearingly square can also be the heartless, lawless villain of President Obama's hyperbolic negative ads.

A second self-revelation contained in Romney's speech: He is not really ideological. He did not engage a debate on the role of government, or America's place in the world, or the future of entitlements. He proclaimed policies instead of arguing for them. He offered five points instead of first principles.

Romney's policy instincts, particularly on the economy, are broadly conservative—a general preference for free markets over planning. But he is not a cause politician, driven to inspire or convert. Problems, in Romney's presentation, require data, analysis and decisions, not ideological abstraction.

What businessman makes management decisions by reading Hayek? And Romney views himself, above all, as a businessman. In his speech, he purposefully deflated Republican ideological ambitions. Let the word go forth: "My promise is to help

you and your family." He made a virtue of this modesty by comparing it to Obama's intergalactic ambitions of four years ago.

This approach has limitations. It makes it harder for Romney to explain how and why his policies would work. Ronald Reagan, for example, offered theories about causes of inflation, the effect of lowering marginal tax rates, the importance of stable monetary policy. If you accepted his worldview, you accepted his policies. Romney's proposals can seem like dots in search of a Crayon.

But there are advantages, as well. It is harder to attack Romney as an ideologue when he doesn't have a particularly vivid ideology. In his convention speech, he managed to distance himself from the worst excesses and hardest edges of his party—from Ron Paul to Todd Akin—without picking any direct fights with the GOP base.

Instead of advancing a more moderate ideology, he dismissed the importance of ideology in mastering current challenges. This can be reassuring to middle-ground voters, distrustful of ideological fevers on both sides.

Romney has often been dinged for lacking authenticity. Whatever its faults, his speech was relentlessly authentic. Romney is a solid, sentimental, not particularly ideological, highly respected businessman.

This is not the normal profile of a transformative leader. But in a country where public competence and responsibility are distant dreams, it is probably enough.

Michael Gerson is a columnist for the Washington Post Writers Group; email michael.gerson@washpost.com.

OTHER VIEWS

# Resources can help you find employment

On Labor Day 2012 and every day, one of my top priorities is to help those looking for work get the training they need for good-paying jobs. By 2020, 17 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations will require a post-secondary certificate or degree. In fact, employers are actively looking to fill nearly 4 million job openings in America right now. Getting the skills that employers want and need is critical to a successful career. Here are a few tips:

■ Get started! Your first step is to check out your local American Job Center. These nearly 3,000 "one-stop-shops" are part of a nationwide network where you can work with experts to update your resume, strengthen interview skills and explore current job openings.

The Rock County Job Center is at 1900 Center Ave., Janesville, WI 53546; phone (608) 741-3400. For more information, visit CareerOneStop.org.

■ Looking for a fresh start? Check out MySkillsMyFuture.org to discover different careers that build off of your existing skills, connect you to free training programs and even find employers in your area looking to hire. The site also shows how much different jobs pay near you or across the country, as well as the additional skills you'll need to succeed.

■ Not sure what career is right for you? Visit MyNextMove.org to find the job that's the perfect fit. Fill out a questionnaire listing your interests and abilities, and get suggestions for different employment paths in more than 900 careers. This site will also identify local apprenticeship and certificate programs to help you train and get a job in high-growth industries.

■ Are you a veteran? "My Next Move for Vets" is designed just for you! Enter your military occupation code, and the site matches your military skills to civilian jobs. If you're a post-9/11-era veteran, you can also download a Veterans Gold Card at DOL.gov/VETS to get specialized services from your local American Job Center.

■ Don't have Internet access at home? We've partnered with local libraries all around the country to make sure that you always have a place to log on to our online resources. Most American Job Centers offer free access for those looking for a job, too.

■ Have more questions? Call us. You can reach our toll-free helpline at 1-866-4-USA-DOL for the most up-to-date resources. Nearly 160,000 people do it each month. And yes, we speak Spanish! The U.S. Department of Labor has other resources to help you find a first job, new job or different career. And our services are free.

Happy Labor Day!

Hilda L. Solis is the U.S. secretary of labor; email talktosolis@dol.gov.



HILDA L. SOLIS

YOUR VIEWS

# I weep for our system if Ryan is intellectual force of GOP

As a relative newcomer to Janesville and Wisconsin, I offer the following observations about Paul Ryan.

Mr. Ryan is photogenic, has a similarly photogenic young family and is a generally affable half-bright son of privilege with a middling education. In an apparent extended adolescence, Mr. Ryan was impressed with the vapid ravings of Ayn Rand, which caused him to enter public service

with the intent to shrink government (space is too limited to critique her simplistic pseudo-philosophy, but U.S. political thought would have been better served had Ms. Rosenbaum—aka Rand—perished with the czar).

In his new role, Mr. Ryan appears to be the prickly little rose of the Republican Party. He has been watered by the flow of right-wing money and fertilized by the manure of reactionary mythology. In what must be described as a mental lapse, since I cannot say that he lied, Mr. Ryan has recently, both directly and indirectly, blamed Mr.

Obama for the closing of the local GM plant. We all know, of course, that event was based on decisions made years ago, preceded Mr. Obama's inauguration, occurred while Mr. Ryan was this district's elected representative and Mr. Bush was still in office.

Mr. Ryan is an interesting addition to the campaign but is unlikely to attract votes outside of the right-wing Republican base. I weep for our system if he is truly the intellectual force of his party.

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Janesville

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